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STATE FOR INL/RM PAMELA THORN

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SUBJECT: 256TH SESSION OF THE COLOMBO PLAN COUNCIL

REF: A) SECSTATE 128839 B) COLOMBO 934

¶1. (U) SUMMARY: On September 27, 2007, The Colombo Plan Council convened for the 256th Session and discussed FY 2005/6 audited accounts, the 2006/7 draft annual report, a special paper on "Strategic Plan of The Colombo Plan 2025," and the needs assessment questionnaire. Ambassador Blake presented to The Colombo Plan a check for US \$185,706 to support the Afghan Women's Shelter Project. End summary.

¶2. (U) The 256th Session of The Colombo Plan was held on 27 September 2007, and chaired by incoming Secretary-General Patricia Yoon-Moi Chia and President Shahzad A. Chaudry, High Commissioner of Pakistan. Council attendees included the Ambassadors of Burma, Maldives, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, United States, and representatives from Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, South Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. Participants adopted the Minutes of the 255th Session and the Special Session held on 18 June 2007, adding an observation from the representative of Japan that the process for selecting the Secretary General should be more transparent. Ambassador Blake stated that to continue harping on a decision based on a constitutionally correct process would hinder The Colombo Plan's mission and operations. The Pakistani High Commissioner concurred.

INSUFFICIENT FUNDING

¶3. (U) The Council approved the accounts for the fiscal year July 2005 to June 2006, which was audited by the Auditor General of Sri Lanka. The President highlighted to the Council the unauthorized transfer of US \$500,000 from the Secretarial Reserves to the Programming Budget which resulted in a FY 2005/06 deficit of US \$427,941. Presently, there is approximately US \$350,000 left in the Reserves which is sufficient to meet the recurring expenses of the Secretariat for only one year. The Reserve Fund acts as a buffer

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since there are delays in payment of the subscription fees due to the different budgetary cycles of the member states. The Secretariat plans to build up the Reserve to cover at least three

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years of expenditure, and will not transfer additional funds for program activities until adequate reserves have been built up. In FY 2005, only 11 out of 25 members paid their mandatory subscriptions on time. The Bangladesh representative informed the Council that it will start contributing again for this coming FY 2007. The President and Secretary General specifically thanked the U.S. for its timely and generous contribution. The President and Secretary General then appealed for member countries to pay their

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pledges and any additional contributions on time. The President also stressed the need for more transparency in the relationship between the Secretary General and the Administrative and Financial Committee.

14. (U) The Secretary General presented the Financial Status for FY 2006/7. According to the report, the current Programming Budget is divided as follows:

Drug Advisory Program (DAP): 82 percent
South-South Technical Cooperation/Data Bank (SSTC): 10 percent
Program for Private Sector Development (PSD): 5 percent
Program for Public Administration (PPA): 1 percent
Long Term Scholarship Program (LTSP): 1 percent
Program on Environment (ENV): 1 percent

The Secretary General noted that only the DAP was satisfactorily funded, while the remaining programs were experiencing diminished funding from the donor countries. Aside from the DAP and PPSD, all other programs were at risk of insufficient funding to operate after FY 2007.

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STRATEGIC PLAN 2025

15. (U) The Secretary General presented a paper outlining her vision of The Colombo Plan for the next eighteen years to year 2025, the 75th anniversary of The Colombo Plan. The paper laid out strategies for each program and listed recommendations on how to strengthen and expand The Colombo Plan's operations and infrastructure. The President proposed that the recommendations be divided into four categories:

a) Reinforcing Existing Measures

-- Recommendations will be anchored and/or modeled on existing programs separate from the Colombo Plan, that have been successfully implemented by member states.

b) New Measures

-- New programs and courses will be based on the Needs Assessment Questionnaire (see 5D below)

c) Structural Change

-- Recommendations included fundraising (voluntary contributions; new sources of income; private sector partnership initiatives; cost-sharing projects); membership expansion (to include Brunei, China, Timor Leste, and former members Britain, Canada and Cambodia); strengthening the Secretariat's monitoring and evaluation mechanism; boosting the Secretariat's manpower; seeking international voluntary officers to be seconded to the Secretariat; and the establishment of a permanent Headquarters.

-- The Council briefly discussed the restructuring of the Consultative Committee Meeting (CCM) to include Ministerial participation. The Ambassador of the Philippines and the representative from India supported participation of the Ministers arguing that it could raise interest and secure more funding for

Colombo Plan activities. The Ambassador to Nepal stated his preference to keep the CCM at the functional level, absent of Ministers. The President concluded that the Council should first focus on the needs assessment questionnaire and to later re-evaluate the CCM.

d) Needs Assessment Questionnaire

-- Member Countries were requested to complete the questionnaire to identify gaps and assess needs for Colombo Plan programs. The Survey is due 15 November 2007, and will be discussed at the next Colombo Plan meeting on 22 November 2007.

DRUG ADVISORY PROGRAM

16. (U) According to the Draft Annual Report of the Colombo Plan for FY 2006/2007, the Drug Advisory Program (DAP) funded 15 drug demand reduction projects. The report stated that 6,471 participants have benefited from the DAP, which is more than half the total number of participants in Colombo Plan programs. Council recommendations for the Drug Advisory Program:

- Conduct annual consultations
- Develop ISO standards and guidelines
- Develop and maintain teams of Master Trainers
- Support and assist governments in early identification of drug dependents
- Promote and support treatment programs in prisons
- Assist governments in conducting public information campaigns
- Produce reference materials, guide books and manuals
- Cooperate with donors for regional/sub-regional programs and participation of non-members.

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17. (U) In accordance with ref A, this cable confirms that Ambassador Blake presented to the Colombo Plan a check for US \$185,706 to support the Drug Advisory Program's Afghan Women's Shelter Project.

18. COMMENT: Secretary General Chia, who arrived in August, seems determined and well on her way to breathing new life into the Colombo Plan through better organization, new ideas, and broader membership and participation. The U.S.-funded Drug Advisory Program continues to be the Colombo Plan's most successful and dynamic program.

BLAKE